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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th
ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: [Due to a curfew and travel ban throughout Iraq during the election period, Iraqi newspapers will not publish from December 14-17.] The major theme in today's editorials was the upcoming election on Thursday.

Analysis: The KDP's At-Taakhi published a page-three editorial entitled, "Kurdistan List 730 is the List for All Iraqis" which again detailed the importance of Iraqis voting for the Kurdish list because it represents the ambitions of all sects in Iraq.

SCIRI run Al-Adala published a page-six editorial, "Why I Should Vote for the UIA's List 555."

Independent Al-Mada's back-page editorial, "On the Way to the Elections" dealt with the vacuousness of electoral slogans and how candidates ignore implementing their promises after they win in the elections.

Both Allawi's newspaper Baghdad and Chalabi's Al-Muatamar today were devoid of editorials and instead focused on news items and interviews with candidates on their respective lists. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

- [1A.](#) "A Silent Day Among Voters and Candidates"
(Ad-Dustoor - independent, no bias, published this front-page editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh)

"Tomorrow will be a silent day when media outlets will not be able to broadcast or publish electoral campaigns for candidates. The specified period of time that was given to the candidates was enough to publicize their electoral advertisings and platforms.

"Before tomorrow, Iraqi voters must decide who to choose in the election. I think voters have studied and made a comparison among all platforms and slogans in order to reach a final decision. We know that the large numbers of candidates have negatively affected or confused voters' choices. However, the majority of voters have made their decisions in advance and electoral campaigns will never be able to sway their minds. These kinds of decisions have been made according to sectarian, ethnic or nationalist affiliations. Hence, this can be considered bigotry which also means a significant loss for the democratic practice-- democracy does not mean bias towards a specific sect or group.

"In any case, there is a small group of people who are calling for the interest of the country rather than their individual self-interest. This group is working hard to convey their message to other people but it seems that no one is listening to them. People should be aware and open-minded in order to distinguish between the semi-important and the most important issues. I think our society is not ready for this stage of democracy because our people need more training in democracy."

- [1B.](#) "Beware of Victory"
(Al-Ittihad - affiliated with the PUK, led by Jalal Talabani, pro-coalition, published this page-four editorial by Abdul Muni'm Al-Assam)

"We must warn here of exacerbating the conflict within electoral competition that threatens to transcend the rules of the political process. We have noticed many slogans, threats, and statements, which were launched during the electoral campaign that caused much fear in the political arena. We have started to fear that political parties that

participate in the election had begun to forget that they function in the framework of the political process.

"The electoral campaign has witnessed practices that are distant from the principles of democracy. We started to see threats and revenge among candidates. However, we know that many of them were friends during the former period of Iraqi opposition. Most of them had one goal which was to end the dictatorship and establish a constitutional, federal and democratic state in Iraq.

"Marginalization and using non-democratic practices during the electoral competition will damage the political future of Iraq. I do not think that the next government will be able to remove these obstacles and restore security and stability if such things continue in Iraq. Those, who think that the winners in the next election will be the winners forever, are wrong. The reality indicates that the battle to build democracy and the new Iraq is a long-term and risky fight."

1C. "For Whom Shall We Vote?"

(Al-Mashriq- affiliated with the Coalition of Iraqi National Unity, anti-coalition, Sufi-leaning, published this page-ten editorial by Shamil Abdul Qadr)

"There is no less than 48 hours left for Iraqis to elect the new members of parliament. The question is who we will elect among the tens of blocs and lists. Shall I vote for the one who is part of my sect, or nationality, or part of my party? Whom shall we elect for the parliament which will decide Iraq's course for the coming four years?

"You should elect the one who did not collaborate with the occupation for any reason; who did not contribute to killing Iraqis or destroying their houses; who did not destroy Najaf and Fallujah, or shoot people in Basrah or Karabla; who did not steal from Iraq; who neither assassinated one scientist or professor, nor a pilot or officer in the former Iraqi Army! Elect the one who really belongs to Iraq, who has an Iraqi mother and father, Iraqi by birth; who did not cooperate with the intelligence services of neighboring countries; who lived among his people and suffered with them for more than 20 years of dictatorship and 13 years of unjust sanctions. You should elect the one who memorizes the holy Qur'an and loves God and the prophet Muhammad; who establishes jihad as a religious duty for himself! Who calls and insists on a timetable for the withdrawal of the occupation. Elect the one whose loyalty to Iraq is not suspect and does not consider sectarianism. Elect anyone who calls for national unity and puts Iraq at the top of his interests before his ambitions. Elect the one who puts Iraq first."

1D. "The Important Word is Silence"

(Al-Watan - anti-coalition, affiliated with the (Sunni) Iraqi National Movement led by Dr. Hatem Mukhlis, published this page-eleven editorial by Daoud Al-Farhan)

"Iraqis, who were deprived of elections for more than half a century, voted three times in one year. The first time, they voted to form a temporary government. The second time they voted in the referendum for the distorted constitution, which was passed through forgery. Now, we have the first parliamentary election to choose a four-year national assembly. But, does this mean that Iraqis have begun to enjoy a typical democracy that accompanied U.S. tanks? What did the Iraqi people gain from the last election? What is the benefit of a constitution that cares about human rights while the government is violating human rights?

"When we read the slogans of electoral lists, especially those that govern the country today, we feel that Iraqis are living in another country. All electoral slogans speak about democracy, security and human rights. In addition, all candidates speak about electoral dreams and promises that will not be implemented. However, the Iraqi people hope that the coming election will depose all politicians who call for sectarianism, sedition, oppression, terrorism and revenge.

"Citizens have the right to freely express their opinions because this is the beautiful face of democracy. But, democracy also has an ugly face that is the problem of the majority and minority, a miserable principle used to form nations and states throughout the world. We noticed that the past two-and-a-half years since the American occupation have been lost. We watched maneuvers, embezzlement, liquidations and removal [deba'athification] during that period. We saw how those who condemned mass graves became gravediggers. We noticed how those who rejected dictatorship and tyranny became the new dictators.

"What can elections accomplish in such circumstances? What can politicians do in order to convince people that they are trustworthy? Citizens do not care about politicians' electoral slogans because they see only car bombs, occupiers' tanks, the prisons of the Ministry of Interior,

the bombing of cities, oil smuggling, and the division of the country. Moreover, they see assassinations, blind violence, corruption and lack of public services and all of these issues contradict what candidates speak about. We do not care about who will win the elections because ethnic power sharing and sectarianism will continue. But, the Iraqi people have another silent word to say."

KHALILZAD